



































## DOWN THE MOUTH OF A VOLCANO

## By HENRY WYSHAM LANIER

NE exploit performed by a follower of Cortés, during the campaign against Mexico, stands out even in that romantic chronicle. After their memorable retreat from Mexico City, while the Spaniards were making ready at Tlascala to retrieve this disaster, it became necessary to manufacture a fresh supply of powder. They easily got all the ingredients except sulphur, but that was not in use among the Indians. The general studied this problem, till it occurred to him that there was sulphur in plenty at the great volcano of Popocatepetl, if it could only be procured. This famous "mountain that smokes" was a landmark throughout Mexico, "the first object which the morning sun greeted in his rising, the last where his evening rays were seen to linger," and was in constant eruption during the Conquest, thrusting its vast smoky, up-side-down pyramid far up into the sky above the snowy cone that crowned its seventeen thousand feet. The Indians believed it to be the abode of the spirits of wicked rulers, whose struggles and groans produced the terrifying noises; and they stood in such dread of it that they had never even attempted to climb it.

This was difficult enough even for one who did not believe in these fables. Popocatepetl is the second highest mountain on the North American continent and the ascent

today, when the rude roads are kept open by sulphur gatherers, is far from easy.

But no difficulties could daunt these men. Cortés ordered a party of five led by Francisco de Montaña to make the trail and see if they could get the precious sulphur, without which their cannon and arquebuses were useless. Ordaz had made the attempt two years before in sheer bravado, but had been driven back finally, when almost at the summit, by the blinding smoke and cinders. Nevertheless, Montaña set forth.

The party forced its way through the tangled forest at the base, so thick that they wondered at times if they should ever get to the real ascent. They persisted; they crossed the black plain of ancient lava a mile wide and four miles long; soon the woods became more open; they found themselves among giant pines, pressing under their feet blue lupins, and purple turtlehead, and occasional Alpine flowers; at fourteen thousand feet they were passing among stunted wind-battered trees; then succeeded scattered grass tussocks and a few crouching flowers; next all vegetation ceased, and they came out on a chaotic surface of lava, twisted and broken into fantastic shapes, often sharp as knives under the feet, and causing many detours around great boulders and pinnacles.

When they reached the snow which lies

at that height summer and winter, they were all attacked with "mountain sickness." It was intensely hot and blinding to the eyes from the glare of the sun reflected against the dazzling whiteness. The rarefied air gave them severe headaches and made it almost impossible to breathe. Still they pressed upward, crossing icy chasms, working their way cautiously over the treacherous snow, slowly zigzagging this way and that to avoid impassable spots.

By great good luck, they found the volcano was not in eruption. They finally reached the very edge of the crater, a huge yawning ellipse over a mile long. Peering over, they could see, through the steam, great patches of dull yellow sulphur, some still smouldering, with streaks of ice and snow melting and trickling down to be again turned into steam. A lurid glow was visible far below, contrasting awesomely with the myriad colors struck by the sun from the upper sides of the crater's throat.

All the hardships and dangers of the ascent were as nothing compared to what now lay before them. Ach should venture down into that gloomy abyss, into the very steam of the eternal fires? The lot fell on Montaña.

Stepping into the large basket they had brought, the determined Spaniard was lowered by his four companions to a depth of four hundred feet. There was a long silence. Those on top braced themselves and shuddered at the thought of what might be happening to their comrade. Then the rope was shaken three times from below—the signal agreed upon. Pulling desperately, they

hauled up Montaña, dripping with sweat and almost blinded, but bringing all the basket would hold of the precious sulphur which he had scraped with his sword from the sides.

Undismayed by the experience, Montaña went down again and again. At length, with all the sulphur they could carry, they started home and returned in triumph to the Spanish camp.

Ordaz had been permitted by the Spanish Emperor to place a burning mountain on his coat-of-arms in memory of his ascent, unsuccessful though it was. Montaña apparently received no reward. His name is almost forgotten save for the mention of his deed in Prescott's pages. But his exploit was unique, and in the roll of brave men he has a sure place.

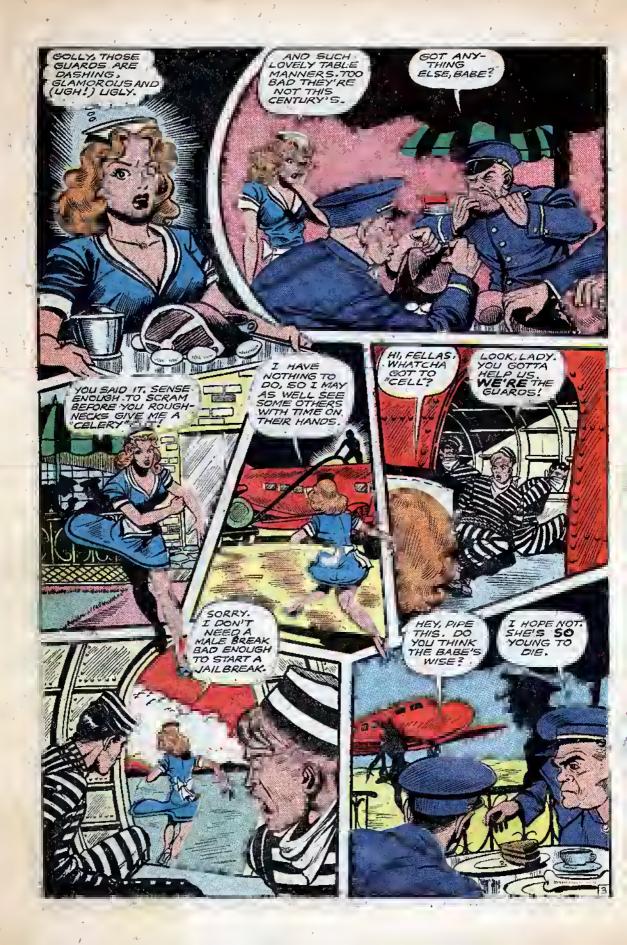
Nearly four centuries later (1914) an American, Frederick Burlingham, descended one thousand two hundred and twelve feet into the central cone of Vesuvius, in order to secure moving pictures of this famous volcano actually "at work." Amid the noise of hoiling, bubbling lava, and a roar "like a great blast furnace," and in imminent peril for one terrible twenty minutes from suffocation, this venturesome explorer secured a picture record which enables us stayathomes to understand the action of a volcano as never before.

It is interesting, too, to know that today patient Indians gather sulphur from this very crater, now inactive, down which the daring Montaña was the first to venture.

THE END

















Singapore.

Monett, Mo.

Dear Editor:

In one Issue of your comic, I read the proposals of Peanuts Mulligar, what he (or sha) would do if editor. I agreed with some of his (or her) views and here are my own: SHEENA, keep: THE HAWK, keep: ZX.5, keep: SKY GIRL, keep: STORY, out; STUART TAYLOR, out; GHOST GALLERY, keep; and finally, add one more story.

Yours faithfully, wee Kim Soon

Dear Editor:

CONTRACTOR OF THE

To me, your comic is just super-dupert in one edi-tion, somebody wrote in and suggested that you take out some of the strips. I think they should all stay out some of the str in. I like them all.

Wilma Lee Everett

Los Angeles, Cal-

Dear Editor: Here is what I think of your comic, SHEENA, THE HAWK, and GHOST GALLERY are swell. As for the rest, you can give them back to the Indians, One thing that wrecks your stories is that you have too many girls in them. Take my advice and you will have a swell book.

'Raymond Grall

Ed.: Don't you like girls, Raymond?

Mandrake Falls

Dear Editor: People are fools. Why does anyone write in and praise or knock a comic strip character anyway? Don't they know they are only fictitious characters? I guess you can't expect much better from people

who spend their time reading comic books though.

Ed.: We believe in letting everybody have his say,
John. And if you don't mind, just where is this
Mandrake Falls, anyway? We couldn't make out the
rest of your address.

New Brunswick, N. J.

Dear Editor:

I was eaven years old when I bought my first copy of your book. I looked for something different and found it. I'm sixteen now and still don't regret it. Every issue gets better. I think you should keep everything and make it longer. Tell that guy who wrote in about your comic being awful to go stick his head in the sand.

Yours truly Dear Editor:

Yours truly, A. A. L.

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Dear Editor:
I think that your comic book is very good. SHEENA is swell, and so are THE HAWK and GHOST GALLERY. I think you should throw out STUART TAYLOR and SKY GIRL.

Yours for a better book,

Compton, Cal.

Dear Editor: think SHEENA, THE HAWK, and GHOST GAL-BY are swell, All of the kids in our fan club LERY are swell. All of the kids in our fan club would like to see SHEENA in the movies in technicolor Jerry Hall

.

Dear Editor: Dear Editor:
I think Jeremy Packard of Wallingford, Connecticut is off his trolley. He says Drew Murdock should become a ghost for good. The trouble with some people who don't like GHOST GALLERY is that they have no sense of imagination.

Herbert Walker

Madison, Wis. Dear Editor:
The Hawk is tops for my money. Make it longer.
Milton Cohen

Regina, Sask.

Dear, Editor: Dear Editor:

I would like for you to know that I enjoy your book immensely. In fact it is my main source of reading material. In my opinion, one fault is that the hero and heroine never get injured. It is impossible for them to escape the dangerous situations they encounter without a scratch. On the whole though, yours is a very enjoyable magazine.

An interested reader, Wendy Smith

New York City.

To the Editor: I know you are not going to print this, but I want to let you know that your book belongs in the gar-

Mac Taylor Ed.: I guess Mac Just doesn't like us.

Dear Editor:

I would like to ask Ruth Goff whose letter was printed in a recent issue of your book just what she meant by her words, "The only two decent features are SHEENA and GHOST GALLERY?" May I tell her that GHOST GALLERY always has something about ghosts or the bodies of people walking around after they are dead? May I say that a least the other features in the magazine (except Stu Taylor) tend to cope with the prosent?

Yours truly, Mae Stevens Center, Texas.

Flushing,/ N. Y.

Dear Editor: I want to thank Drew Murdock for such a swell story of the GHOST GALLERY. Would it be possible to have two stories of it? Here's hoping. I think STUART TAYLOR should be made shorter or taken out to give more room to GHOST GALLERY.

Thank, you.

Yours truly, Joan Vicar

Plainview, Texas.

Dear Editor: i have been reading your comic for but a little while. The only thing I find wrong with it is ZX-5 and his walking care. It does too much. I suggest he do without it for a while.

Kenny Phillips

Little Rock, Ark.

To the Editor:
The trouble with Kay Byrum who doesn't like SKY GIRL is that she just has no sense of humor.
Polly O'Donnell

Kennewick, Wash.

Dear Editor: Dear Editor:
I wish you would burn up all the features except
SHEENA. She le better than excellent, I wish you
would tell W. Morgan Thomas that his SHEENA
is the best feature in any comic.
Sincerely.
Russel Hicks President of
Sheena Fan Club No. 1

Brookings, S. D.

Dear Editor: I like all your stories and characters and think that STU TAYLOR is one of the best and has the best art. Keep STU in your book, it's tops with me.

Texas City, Texas.

Dear Editor: made. STUART TAYLOR could be left out and another script of SHEENA added, SHEENA is my favorite, then THE HAWK and GHOST GALLERY and SKY GIRL.

You could omit the written story and add an exciting mystery instead. have been reading your book for a long time and

Yours truly,

Sybil Andress













